ENGLISH MONTHLY ISSUE 99 MARCH 2021

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living



The best partnership between a man and his wife is Intellectual partnership.

A MAGAZINE FOR THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

Spirit of Islam monthly…

- Presents Islam, the religion of nature, in the contemporary idiom to help Muslims rediscover Islam from the original sources
- Explains Creation plan of God for humankind
- Enlightens people on the subject of global peace
- Addresses contemporary issues
- Assists the readers to deal with life's challenges
- Offers Spirituality to a wider circle of spiritual seekers
- Fosters greater communal harmony through religious understanding

United in prayers

SOI Editorial Committee

SPIRIT OF ISLAM

Towards Global Peace & Spiritual Living

ISSUE 99 MARCH 2021

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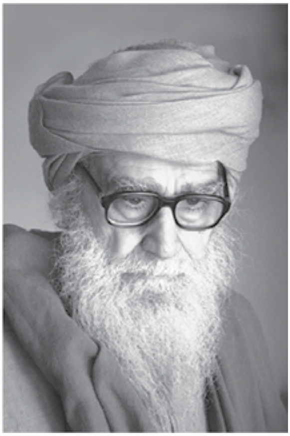
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FROM MAULANA'S DESK



***Maulana Wahiduddin Khan**, born in 1925, in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, is an Islamic spiritual scholar who is well-versed in both classical Islamic learning and modern disciplines. The mission of his life has been the establishment of worldwide peace. He has received the Padma Vibhushan, the Demiurgus Peace International Award and Sayyidina Imam Al Hassan Peace award for promoting peace in Muslim societies. He has been called 'Islam's spiritual ambassador to the world' and is recognized as one of its most influential Muslims[1]. His books have been translated into sixteen languages and are part of university curricula in six countries. He is the founder of the Centre for Peace and Spirituality based in New Delhi.*

DECONDITIONING THE MIND

NO man is an island entire of itself. Every man is born in a particular society, and it is this society that creates the mindset of an individual. We imbibe the effects of our surroundings and the prevailing culture. Every person is a product of the environment or society they live in. These societal effects that are cultivated in one's mind are referred to as the conditioning of the mind. Everyone possesses a mind that is conditioned in some way or the other, and this is the biggest issue we face.

It is this conditioning that is responsible for turning us away from our original pure nature. In this respect, everyone is a sure case of a conditioned mind. It is very important that this unnatural effect is eliminated; which means the conditioned mind must be deconditioned. Hence, it becomes imperative that each one of us decondition ourselves and bring ourselves back on to our pure original nature. This process of deconditioning of the mind can also be called as the re-engineering of the mind.

1. The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims 2020, Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, Jordan.

In society, various activities are undertaken with the aim of purification of the mind. Despite diverse activities, this goal is far from being realized. This is because all these activities are attempted without first deconditioning the mind. It is as if everyone is on a journey which has yet to commence. It is only after deconditioning the mind that one can have a truly well-prepared mind. Without such a well-prepared mind, one will be unable to accept anything with an open mind, and will, instead, understand things based on preconceived notions.

Deconditioning of the mind can only be done by one process alone, and that is introspection. This is a continuous, merciless examination of our own selves in order to improve.

We are all born in a pure natural state. Due to the conditioning we receive from society and family, our nature is influenced. This conditioning is like a series of coverings over our true nature, similar to the peels of an onion. Deconditioning is a process that can be symbolically explained as a removal of these layers, one by one, until the true, pure nature is uncovered. In this respect an onion is a material example of the deconditioning process.

All efforts to purify the mind are unproductive until and unless a deconditioning of the mind is first undertaken. And the biggest thing that requires deconditioning is the total elimination of negative thinking. *Tazkiya* is the Islamic name for this process of deconditioning and purification of the mind, which has to be undertaken continuously, till the end of one's life.

The Process of Deconditioning

Deconditioning of the mind can only be done by one process alone, and that is introspection. This is a continuous, merciless examination of our own selves in order to improve. This improvement can come in two ways. One is to accept the harsh criticism of others by acknowledging their external 'hammering' with an open mind. Without being offended, one should take on board harsh criticism from others, and, after an objective analysis, carry out a complete re-assessment of oneself.

The other method of deconditioning can be called 'self-hammering'. This is to look at ourselves with a critical eye, to evaluate ourselves day and night; to perceive every mistake with severity and then introspect by mercilessly 'hammering' ourselves without giving ourselves any concession in any matter. Instead of accusing others, we should carry out an objective analysis of ourselves and find our faults.

These are the only two possible ways of deconditioning. Either one accepts the ‘hammering’ of others or one becomes one’s own worst critic by ‘self-hammering’. The one who likes to hear good things about himself from others and makes excuses to himself for his mistakes will always remain a conditioned person and will never be able to decondition or purify his mind. ❑

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FROM THE EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Prof. Farida Khanam *is an author, editor, translator, public speaker and former professor of Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Among her books are 'A Simple Guide to Sufism' and 'A Study of World's Major Religions'. She has translated into English many books authored by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. Currently the chairperson of CPS International, she is a regular contributor of articles to various publications. Prof. Khanam has edited Maulana's English translation of the Quran and has also translated his Urdu commentary of the Quran into English.*

ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF GENDER EQUALITY

MEN Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus is a book written by American author and relationship counselor John Gray. The book states that there are fundamental psychological differences between the two sexes. Not taking into account these differences creates problems and friction in relationships, families, and society at large.

In an article published in *Time* magazine, November 18, 2019, p. 21, biological differences among men and women are attributed to be a factor in women being more susceptible to lung cancer, at least in theory:

"Research shows that the type of lung cancer most common among nonsmokers disproportionately affects women, and young women are more likely to have a gene mutation often found in the tumors of nonsmokers. Quirks of female sex hormones or women's immune systems could be responsible (...). (...) something about female biology could make women more susceptible than men to genetic mutations caused by carcinogens in cigarettes. If so, a higher percentage of women who pick up the habit could develop cancer, relative to men."

Thus, the biological and psychological differences between men and women are a scientific reality. Any attempt to formally guide human beings regarding their role and status in society must necessarily take into account these differences. The Quran calls Islam a religion of nature. This is because Islam is, in fact, based on the laws of nature. The commands of the Quran are a direct expression of those laws which have operated in the world of nature since its creation.

The teachings of Islam regarding women are based on the same laws of nature. Accepting them is not akin to the acceptance of general human laws, where both acceptance and refusal are possible. The rejection of Islamic teachings as regards women is a rejection of the laws of nature, and by doing so, man can never successfully construct his life in the present world.

Study of the Quran and *Hadith* informs us that one of the laws of nature is that all the things in the world have been created in the form of pairs. The Quran states: And We created pairs of all things so that you might reflect. (51: 49) The scientific study of the universe has further corroborated this law of nature. The primary unit of the universe, the atom, is composed of negative and positive particles. In the absence of any one of the two, the atom cannot come into existence. Even trees have male and female characteristics. The whole world is said to exist in pairs. Nature's entire factory has functioned all along on this binary basis.

Gender binarism shows that if anything in this world is to function properly, it must first recognize its true position and adhere strictly to the limits set for it by nature itself. For instance, if the negative particles of atoms tried to change themselves into positive particles, or vice versa, the entire structure of the atom would be shattered. Similarly, if men, animals, and trees wanted a change in their position and they opted for a change in their roles—the entire system of nature would be disrupted.

The teachings of Islam regarding women are based on the laws of nature. The rejection of Islamic laws as regards women is a rejection of the laws of nature, and by doing so, man can never successfully construct his life in the present world.

Islamic teachings regarding women is rooted in this system of nature. According to Islam, men and women are equal as regards honour and status, but physically, biologically, and psychologically they are different. To maintain the system of nature between men and women socially, Islam advocates that women should work in their capacity.

The system of the human world is divided into two departments of equal importance: one is represented by the 'home' and the other by the 'office.' Just as an office in this context is not confined by four walls but represents a centre of activity, similarly 'home' is not marked by a boundary, being also a complete practical centre of activity. Under

this division, men and women have been assigned different fields of activity. All tasks are of equal importance, being neither superior nor inferior.

This system of nature has functioned successfully in the world for thousands of years. With the emergence of western civilization in modern times, efforts were made for the first time to repudiate this system. In the name of gender equality, an intensive movement was launched. Male and female were declared to be identical and interchangeable in all respects. But the 200-year experiment showed that this self-styled equality could not be established in any part of the world.

The system of the human world is divided into two departments of equal importance: one is represented by the 'home' and the other by the 'office.'

Many reports and surveys came out in the western press which describe the failure of the feminist movement. Following is a report concerning the U.S.A., the most developed part of the world. This report was published in the October 1993 issue of *The Atlantic* magazine under the caption: *Feminism's Identity Crisis, The most effective backlash against feminism comes from within.*

According to the report, polls suggest that a majority of women hesitate to associate themselves with the feminist movement, not wanting to identify themselves as feminists. The polls also adumbrate unarticulated ambivalence about feminist ideals, particularly concerning private life.

Feminism is a non-issue, says Ellen Levine, the editor-in-chief of *Redbook*. "Women don't think about it. They don't talk about it. And they seem not to be particularly interested in politics. Feminism, however, is popularly deemed to represent the belief that men and women are equally capable of raising children and equally capable of waging war. Thus, feminism represents, in the popular view, a rejection of femininity." According to a survey by *Redbook*, feminism has made it harder for women to balance work and family life. Ellen Levine believes that wage-earning mothers still tend to feel guilty about not being with their children and to worry that "the more women get ahead professionally; the more children will fall back." ❏

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THE SPIRITUAL ROLE OF WOMEN

Realizing the Potential of Women

STUDIES show that women have been specially gifted by nature with such qualities as fit them for the role of bringing about peace and harmony in society in times of conflict. These qualities are gentleness, selflessness, compassion, mildness and, above all, a spiritual approach to life. A study of history tells us that women have always played this role, albeit mostly on the home front.

It is a matter of common knowledge that women have always contributed greatly to normalizing conditions at home by relieving tensions and resolving conflicts. The softness of their approach to problems and their marked capacity for pacifying are clearly attributes which will eliminate stress.

When we look at Islamic history, the first instance we find of such positive feminine influence is that of Khadija, the wife of the Prophet. When the Prophet Muhammad received his first revelation from the angel in the cave of Hira, it was a totally new experience for him, and he trembled in fear of what he had seen and heard. He immediately set off for his home after the disappearance of the angel. When he had regained his composure, he related the incident to Khadija. She did her best to assure him that no harm would come to him as he always spoke the truth, helped the poor and those in distress, and invariably treated others with respect. With these reassuring words, she successfully calmed him down, employing all her natural gifts of gentleness, sympathy, understanding, and, above all, selfless love. After the Prophet of Islam left this world, great differences arose among Muslims in many matters. During his lifetime, all such issues had been referred to him for a solution. But after the demise of the Prophet, it was now left to his wife Aisha, who had been under his training for many years, to play the very positive role of guide and mentor. Having become fully imbued with the spirit of the religion of Islam, she used to give guidance to both male and female Companions of the Prophet. In this way, she successfully resolved such differences.

Women have been specially gifted by nature with such qualities as fit them for the role of bringing about peace and harmony in society in times of conflict.

However, in those days there was no platform from which her example could benefit the general public, nor was there the media—as we have now—to cover such roles and place them on record. In most of the cultures in ancient and medieval societies, women remained indoors and played their role within the confines of their own homes. That is why we know so little about the contribution of women in this arena.

The most prominent name of a woman within the *Sufi* tradition is that of Rabia Basri (713-801). She was born in 713 C.E. into a poor family in Basra, Iraq. She devoted her life to worshipping God and serving others. She lived a life of extreme asceticism, and a large number of disciples gathered around her. Her mystical sayings have become proverbial.

The spiritual role of women has never been properly realized because of the failure to institutionalize their role in society.

The Prophet of Islam said "Men and women are two halves of a single unit."

In Rabia Basri's times, Muslim society was rent with great religious differences. But her strong spiritual personality exerted such a powerful influence that people eventually forgot their doctrinal differences and rallied around her. She laid emphasis on pure divine love, which alone could minimize all these differences.

According to a *Hadith*, the Prophet of Islam observed: "Men and women are two halves of a single unit."

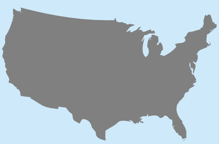
Teachings to this effect in the Quran and *Hadith* ushered in a new age of gender equality. With this new-found freedom, women were able to play a great role in society, particularly women who belonged to royal families. They were highly educated by the standards of their times, and, in royal circles, with greater social exposure, they had better opportunities to exert their influence.

One such woman was Maryam Makani, the mother of Akbar, the Mughal emperor of India. Once, Mullah Abdun Nabi, Akbar's teacher, insulted the emperor before the entire court. Akbar was enraged and wanted to punish him. This could have meant even the death sentence for the offender. Akbar's mother intervened and successfully managed to calm him down. She told him that his pardon would go down in history, that history would remember that 'an emperor, having all the power at his disposal, forgave an offender'

Such incidents abound in history, but because the central figures were usually either a mother, like Maryam Makani, or a daughter or wife of an emperor—women who were already famous because of their royal kinship—people failed to perceive how their roles could go beyond this framework and become applicable to general situations in society.

Both biological and historical studies show that women have been specially gifted with qualities required for the establishment of social harmony. In the Muslim case, this potential of women has never been properly realized because of the failure to institutionalize their role in Muslim society. Had Muslim women been trained to perform this task, they would have been able to play this role far more effectively, and on a far greater scale. The need of the hour today is to institutionalize this role and give proper training to women so that this capability with which women have been so abundantly endowed by nature may be fully harnessed.

Once this feminine potential has been realized, the world will definitely be a better place for all to live in. ❑



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- Prayers
- Prophet Muhammad
- Arguments for the Hereafter
- Quran

Attention

Readers

To mark International Women's Day 2021, we have produced a Special Issue of the *Spirit of Islam*.

This March issue presents a selection of articles discussing the revolutionary role women have played in the history of Islam.

Bonus Feature: Ms Stuti Malhotra interviews Prof. Farida Khanam. Read the inspiring story of Farida Khanam in her own words.

Kindly post your feedback on this interview. You may write in English, Hindi, or Urdu.

A panel comprising of Ms. Fahmida Khan (Urdu), Ms. Raazia Siddiqui (English) and Ms. Muslimah Siddiqui (Hindi) will judge these feedbacks.

The best 10 feedbacks will receive a prize.

Further 10 good feedbacks will receive consolation prizes.

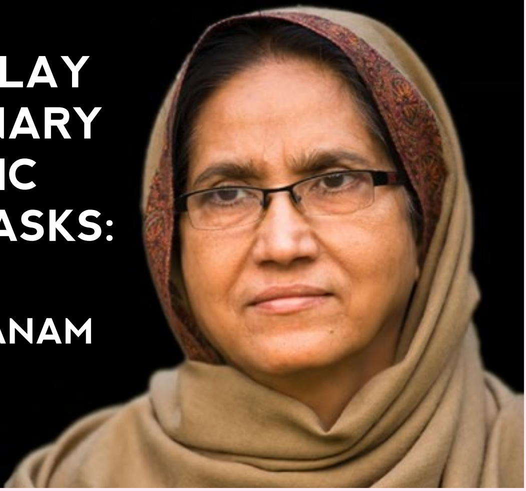
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WOMEN CAN PLAY A REVOLUTIONARY ROLE IN ISLAMIC MISSIONARY TASKS:

PROF. FARIDA KHANAM



Editorial Director of *Spirit of Islam* Prof. Farida Khanam is a former professor of Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. She has around a dozen books to her credit. By translating the Urdu books of Padma Vibhushan awardee Maulana Wahiduddin Khan into English, she has single-handedly brought the ideology of peace and spirituality to the English-speaking world. She is the chairperson of the Centre for Peace and Spirituality (CPS International), an organization founded by her father Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. She has travelled around the globe disseminating the peaceful message of Islam. She is a kind and loving mentor to hundreds of women around the world who are part of CPS. Lovingly called *Aapa*, she is a motherly figure for the CPS fraternity. Her role in CPS is fundamental.

Ms. Stuti Malhotra is a foundation member of CPS. She regularly writes for the *Speaking Tree* column of *Times of India*. With a corporate experience of 20 years, she is presently doing her Ph.D. in Comparative Studies of Religion from Punjabi University Patiala. She plays a pivotal role in Punjabi initiative of CPS. She also guided the Punjabi translation of the Quran to fruition. To mark the International Women's Day, she interviews Prof. Farida Khanam. This tete-a-tete brings to light the sheer hard work, devotion and dedication *Aapa* has put in on her spiritual and intellectual journey.

Aapa, to begin from the beginning, please tell us about your childhood and early education.

We lived in a remote village of Azamgarh, U.P. We were given some tuitions privately. That is all about my early education. The people of my family who had received higher education had all moved to the cities. There was no school for higher studies where we lived. There was no one to guide us. There were no resources. My father, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, has been a bibliophile all his life. He would spend all his time in libraries. His elder brother had a business in the city and lived there. There was a very good library, *Dar-ul-Mussannifeen*, in the city of Azamgarh. My father would spend all his day in the library. He used to read and write there. He would visit us for a couple of days when my mother took ill as he was so focussed on getting all the information that he needed to understand Islam in the modern idiom and write books to make the same understandable to people at large.

For our basic needs, we were provided for. We had our farms and orchards to take care of our needs. Our village had no basic facilities like road and electricity. There was no hospital or school for higher education. With development all around, the village has seen much progress recently. Now my family has established an English medium higher secondary school named *Ziauddin Memorial School.*

The city-dwellers would visit these farms and orchards during summer vacation. This was my first brush with educated people. I envied them when I heard some of them speak English words. This was very strange and thrilling. One English word that I vividly remember to this day is the word 'seed'. When I heard this word, I just wondered what the meaning of 'seed' was. After the death of my grandfather, my eldest uncle got my father admitted to a *madrasa* (religious seminary), *Madrasatul Islah*, Saraimir, a place near my village. Afterwards, my eldest uncle became a well-to-do businessman; he took care of my younger uncle's higher studies. He graduated as an electrical engineer from Banaras Hindu University.

As we belonged to Pathan family, there was no particular emphasis on women's education. My cousin who was very senior to me in age was the first woman of our family to get higher education. Her name was Muslimah. She passionately pursued her M.A. first in Urdu then in Persian appearing as a private candidate. She went on to become the principal of an inter-college in Moradabad. She then encouraged other women of the family to seek education. This was the beginning of women's education in my family. The women who thus got educated

got married and got settled in the cities. I still had no formal education. I continued to stay in the village. When my father lived in Rampur in the 60s, we got a chance to study in a girls' *madrasa* till 5th standard. This *madrasa* was called '*Bachchiyon Ka Madrasa*'.

I was probably thirteen or fourteen years old at the time. Meeting my relatives who had received education was a matter of great envy for me. My mother Sabia Khatoon Alwi was very fond of getting education. She belonged to a Syed family. In a Pathan household, a woman had no place except in her home and hearth. This tradition still lingered in my family. When my father moved to Delhi as the editor of *Al-Jamiat* (an Urdu weekly), Dr Mahmood Qadri, an acquaintance of my father, informed him that he had made arrangements for girls' tuition at his home. He then also arranged that these girls could appear for private exams at Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University. The facility for private and external exams was specially put in place to help girls from backward background.

When my father found out about this facility, he told my mother about it. My mother was thrilled to hear about it. She arranged to send me to New Delhi by train and told me that my father would be waiting for me at the Railway Station in New Delhi. Just imagine a girl of 13-14 years of age, who had hardly ventured out of her home, was travelling all alone in a train, which was about a 26-hour journey!

Dr Mahmood Qadri has had a huge role in my life. He allowed me to stay in his house for six months. I could not stay with my father as he was allotted just one room from his employers. Dr Mahmood's daughter, Juwaria was also preparing for her class X exam. He treated me as his daughter. We studied together. Without attending previous classes, I directly appeared for class X. The result was quite expected. I failed in a couple of subjects. I think I was very different in my formative years. I didn't cry, I just started preparing again. I took the exam in the next year. This time around, I got good grades.

Soon, my mother joined us in New Delhi. Maulana Asad Madani, the then president of *Jamiat Ulema*, arranged a nice big room with a balcony for us. Thereafter, it became relatively easy for us. I then took class XI exam. Dr Majida Asad was then teaching at Delhi University. She and her husband being aware of the backwardness of Muslim women in education, had established a tuition bureau at their house. It was their way of serving the society. Dr Majida had a Ph.D. in Hindi. Her husband Mr Asad was director in the NCERT. They had appointed very good teachers for every subject. Here we got the opportunity for the first

time to study under very good teachers. I was the only student who did all the exercises given by the teachers. Quite naturally, I put my heart and soul in my studies. I passed the exam with flying colours.

How did you manage to pursue M.A. in English, then Ph.D. given such a state of affairs?

Then came the time to take admission to a college. Delhi College was near our house. Now it is called Zakir Hussain Delhi College. The college was founded in 1825 by Muslims, it was located in a Muslim area, so a lot of Muslim girls studied there.

It was at this time that my father interfered and his decision directed the future of my life. I was a voracious reader. I would read day and night. I got exceedingly good marks in Persian when I appeared for the exam in Aligarh Muslim University. I was naturally inclined to pursue a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree in Persian. I happily enrolled myself for B.A. in Persian. When I told my father about it, he became quite agitated. He asked what I would do with B.A. in Persian. I was then completely ignorant of the global prominence English language had attained. He did not allow me to gather my breath. He forced me to take the half-hour long walk back to the college to enrol myself in B.A. in English.

This was truly a fateful interference. It was such a big step. Had I not been guided on time, I would not have become what I am today. I had no inkling about the international status of English. I did not know then that it would be my good fortune to translate my father's books in English or that I would be doing *dawah* in the international arena.

It seems to me now that it was a God-ordained interference. I had scarce knowledge of English then. To this day I vividly remember how I did not understand anything in the beginning. I could not understand the lectures as they were being delivered in English. I would just sit on the last bench and stare blankly at my teachers. English came to me slowly. Many months passed before I could fathom bits of my lectures. To cut a rather long story short, I somehow managed to get passing marks in B.A. Though still not securing good grades, I was fortunate to get admission in M.A. English in Delhi University and completed it.

I was fired with the zeal to improve my English. Then I met Mr Soz, a professor of English at Jamia. My father knew him quite well. I would visit him sometimes to ask him questions about English. If someone who knew English came to visit my father, I would take my books and consult him about any areas of grammar and usage. We did not have

enough money to afford a personal tutor. This was not an ideal way to study, but I had no other alternative. When the results came out, I had passed the exam while many other bright minds had failed. I have no other explanation for it except that it was a special succour from God. I completed M.A. in 1976.

After completing my M.A. in English, I wanted to study Islam formally. I therefore took admission in M.A. in Islamic Studies in Jamia Millia Islamia University. I was very fortunate that the teachers in the department at the time were exceptional. I developed deep insight into the subject under their guidance. They helped me to understand Islam and its various academic aspects during my time there. This period further gave me tremendous exposure and opportunities for interaction when people came to the department and we attended seminars and conferences in the university. My understanding of the subject developed substantially and I was able to secure a first division as well as a first position in M.A. in Islamic Studies in 1982. This motivated me to study the subject further and I enrolled in the Ph.D. programme of Jamia under Prof. Mushirul Haq, a well-known scholar who went on to become the Vice Chancellor of Kashmir University. His guidance helped me to develop academically and I received my doctorate degree in 1990 in *The Religio-Political Thoughts of Syed Abul Ala Maududi*.

Please describe your experience in Jamia Millia Islamia. How did you get to teach there?

After obtaining my Ph.D., I did not know what to do further. I stayed at home. One day I chanced to meet a friend of mine. She told me that she had completed an elementary diploma course in Arabic and now she had enrolled in the diploma course in Arabic in Jamia Millia Islamia. I felt myself drawn to this course, and took admission. In Jamia, the Department of Arabic and the Department of Islamic Studies are adjacent to each other. Once I visited the Department of Islamic Studies. At that time Dr Majid Ali Khan was the head of the department. He informed me about a temporary vacancy for six months in the Department. He asked me to fill out a form if I was interested. I filled out the form and submitted it. Fortunately, I was selected and had my first stint as a lecturer for six months. It was in 1993. I was accorded an extension of one month.

An interview was planned for the permanent post. Dr Majid Ali Khan knew my father quite well and had read many of my father’s books. He supported me to appear for the interview. Then the unthinkable

happened. I was selected. It was a special help from God. A village girl who did not get elementary education was now going to be a lecturer in a reputed university. It was in 1994. It is usually really difficult for someone to get a permanent job in a university. One has to work on a temporary basis for many years before getting a permanent post. I got a permanent post just after seven months.

I was another person before Jamia, I became another person after Jamia. I did not know how to talk, how to interact. Now I got the opportunity to engage in fruitful intellectual discussions with fellow teachers and students. I participated in seminars and conferences that helped me in my travels all over the world.

How did your career pan out in Jamia?

I had a twenty-four-year rich career at Jamia Millia Islamia. I had the opportunity to teach almost every subject about Islam and related fields. I taught Islamic History, Period of the Prophet and his Companions, Islamic Jurisprudence, Muslim Theology, Islamic Mysticism, World's Major Religions, Muslim Philosophy and Muslim Sciences. I also wrote articles and books on many of these subjects.

I began my career as an assistant professor. I then moved up the ladder and worked as an associate professor. I retired in 2017 as full-fledged professor. One needs to show academic work for promotion in universities. Therefore, I wrote a lot of articles and books. This academic pursuit required me to read voraciously. All of these greatly benefited me in my intellectual and personal development.

Whom did you look up to among the Islamic personalities during your youth?

I don't remember any writer having any particular impact on me. I would just read my father's writings. My father introduced me to Khalida Adeeb Khanam (1884–1964). She was born in Turkey. One of her books was about the Conflict between the East and the West in Turkey. I was thus inspired to write a book one day. She visited India and delivered lectures in different universities.

This book was published in Urdu in 1938 titled '*Turkey mein Mashriq-O-Maghrib ki Kashmakash*.'

One of the main reasons that Urdu writers did not impress me was the style of their writing. Urdu writers still write in a rhetorical and poetical manner. The words they use are high-sounding verbose, but having no real import. Urdu writings are full of bombastic words. On the other hand, English literature is realistic in its approach.

How did you start playing such a pivotal role in CPS mission?

My father's Urdu monthly *Al-Risala* began to be published in 1976. My father has been a perfectionist all his life. He would never trust anyone to work with the same diligence and accuracy that he aspired for. That's why, he preferred to work alone. But there are some aspects of writing that the author cannot do himself, for example, calligraphy, proofreading, etc. To rule out any mistakes in the written piece, he would often ask us to help him. We would proofread from a copy and he would corroborate it. This was how I got involved with this mission.

Then I developed interest in his ideas. His working room was adjacent to ours. I would often listen to his conversations with visitors. It was quite rare then that he addressed me directly. When the magazine came out, my younger brother Saniyasnain Khan was still in school. We didn't have enough resources to get people to work for us. So, in the beginning, I did all the work. Then after that, two sisters Ms Qaiser, and Ms Shahjahan studying in Delhi College joined us. They helped us in getting the magazine packed and dispatched.

My elder brother, Dr Zafar-ul-Islam Khan was studying in Cairo. When he came home during a vacation, he got hold of the manuscript of a book my father had written titled *Al-Islam* (published in English as *The Vision of Islam*). We had no money to publish it. My brother was very much impressed by the book after reading it. He asked a college professor to translate the book in English. The translation was not good and needed revision. But I was not capable enough then to revise it, therefore this book was published about 30 years later after thorough revision.

I started on a very important project that became a defining moment of my life. My father had published a very popular Urdu book titled *Mazhab aur Jadeed Challenge* way back in 1966 while he was in Lucknow. Due to the subject matter of the book, my father wished to make this book available in English. It was first translated by one IAS officer, but it was not up to the mark. A major drawback in the book was the unavailability of quotes in original English. My father used Urdu translations of the quotes after reading them in different libraries. Now, he had no record about which book was available in which library. The English version would be imperfect if it did not contain the original quotes. My father had never hoped that someday the book would be published in English. Therefore, he did not keep a record of the original English sources. He was satisfied with a translated version of them. It was great challenge for us. I had then completed my M.A. in English from Delhi University a year ago. I knew that the library there was really great. I took this

responsibility upon myself to collect all the original quotes. Though I had passed the course and was no longer a student of the university, I was still allowed access to the library without an ID card. I started visiting the library daily and collected the original quotes. I managed to find most of the quotes with references. Then I gathered courage to translate the book myself into English. The English translation of the book *Mazhab aur Jadeed Challenge* was published as *God Arises* in 1985.

I think that was the first time my father realized that women can also work in spheres beyond the home and hearth. He had never thought so before. He had received his education in *madrasa*, where all tasks were performed by men. The most a woman had worked outside the home was as a teacher in our family. No woman from the family had ventured on any such missionary work. He had never imagined that I would succeed in getting all the original quotes. This was my entry in this mission. I realized only now that this was my training to do this task of translation and editing at a later stage.

Who guided you during your initial days as translator?

I was lucky to find a British lady, Mrs Anna Khanna, who was married to an Indian, Prem Khanna, an IAS officer. Her articles appeared in *the Times of India*. She conducted English classes for diplomats for which she would give advertisements in *The Times of India*. Dr Saniyasnain Khan, my younger brother contacted her. We both started visiting her. I learned the nuances of English style, grammar and usage from her. Then I started translating Maulana's text from Urdu to English. I would then submit my work for her scrutiny. She painstakingly taught me where I had made mistakes. She pointed to me where my translation was affected by MTI (Mother Tongue Influence).

I was also impressed by her sheer honesty. She charged for her efforts hour-wise. She kept a watch in front of her while working. Because she worked from home, sometimes she had to leave the work and attend to some important household responsibility. While going out, she would stop the watch, and noted how many minutes she had worked. She revised and edited all our books. She used a red pen to mark mistakes. I would look at these red marks very carefully and tried to understand the mistakes I had made. This journey of learning lasted for more than 3 decades. She died in 2020. Through Mrs Anna Khanna, God trained me to translate Maulana's Urdu material into the contemporary English idiom. Today we have translated or compiled nearly 100 books of Maulana in English and we have a full translation-cum-editing team which I oversee in CPS.

What difficulties did you face when Al-Risala began to be published?

The writings of my father Maulana Wahiduddin Khan presented Islam in a style and idiom that was totally novel to the readers. Many readers responded to this message with outright denial. There was so much opposition that no one was willing to publish advertisements of *Al-Risala* magazine in their newspapers even if we offered money. Nobody was willing to make annual subscription for the magazine. I still remember the joy we felt when someone made a subscription.

The situation took a grave turn. We could not afford living and publishing the magazine from Delhi. There was a time when my father thought that he would have to go to the village now and there would be no work here. At this most critical time, my elder brother Dr Zafar-ul-Islam Khan who was working in Libya at the time offered his full support. It was a divine help indeed. It is my firm belief if the message is true, then God Almighty puts it in the hearts of the people and they become supporters of the message. The Urdu version is probably the most-read magazine in the Urdu-reading world.

What is the importance of Spirit of Islam magazine for the mission?

It was our aim to take the message of peace and spirituality to the English-speaking world. To cater to this *Al-Risala* English was published from 1984 to 2002 from Delhi by Dr Saniyasnain Khan. Thereafter, it was published under the name *Spiritual Message* from 2003 till 2012 from Mumbai by Mr Haroon Shaikh. Mr Haroon Shaikh, with just one assistant to help him in this task, painstakingly published the magazine for a decade. Also his efforts are fundamental in the Quran translation projects of CPS. The English magazine, however, became a standard in both the general public and the academic world when it was published as *Spirit of Islam* by Ms Fathima Sarah supported by her husband Aijaz Ahmed and an editorial team. The magazine re-engineers minds, especially the youth towards positivity so that people become peaceful members of society. Today the *Spirit of Islam* magazine (www.spiritofislam.co.in) is gaining in popularity and is widely read in the English-reading world.

What was the need to bring another English translation of the Quran which you edited?

My father came across a research from The Quran Complex, Madinah, Saudi Arabia on the English translations of the Quran that concluded: “In spite of 47 English Quran translations, none has received the acceptance of the modern world.” I started looking closely at the

available English translations of the Quran with my father and realized that one of the reasons for this is that the various Quran translations lacked clarity. Moreover, many verses of the Quran are incorrectly translated to the effect that they produce an entirely different meaning than the one originally intended. Many words like *Jihad*, *shahid* are incorrectly translated. The word '*jihad*' is used in the Quran to mean striving and struggle. Many translators have rendered it as armed warfare. The word 'shahid' means witness, but it has been translated as martyr. There are hundreds of such instances. I have compiled a list of all these corrections. One can contact me for the details. This was the impetus for me and my father to produce an English translation of the Quran which has clarity and is written in the contemporary idiom. Maulana's translation of the Quran edited by me was published in 2008. It has since received worldwide acceptance as a clear translation of the Quran in contemporary English, which is lucid and easy to understand. It is now distributed worldwide and millions of copies have already been distributed with the help of individuals, groups, mosques, institutions, hotels and others in an organized manner under the guidance of Dr Saniyasnain Khan.

Why does Maulana emphasize so much on women's participation?

Maulana's emphasis on women's participation in this mission was not deliberate. I was already associated with the mission. When the English version of *Al-Risala* (now published as *Spirit of Islam*) was started in 1984, many educated people started contacting us. One of them was Mrs. Ghazala Jung, with M.A. in English. She would improve our English translation as well as assist in proofreading. After reading an article by Maulana in an English newspaper, Ms. Usha Mahajan started visiting us regularly. Ms Usha started attending the Sunday lectures of Maulana. She read a number of books on Islam. She was very impressed by the teachings of Islam, especially those pertaining to family life. She says that these teachings have changed her way of thinking. She applies these teachings to her life. Her son Montu Mahajan, a software engineer, has also been reading Maulana's books. He is particularly interested in understanding the concept of peace in Islam. Similarly other ladies visited Maulana to attend his programmes.

In 2001, CPS International, Center for Peace and Spirituality was established. Ms Priya Malik, Mr Rajat Malhotra and Mr Khalid Ansari were the founding members of CPS. My father founded the organization to disseminate the true message of Islam in the modern idiom and to promote interfaith harmony and peace. A number of women then formally joined CPS such as Ms Stuti Malhotra, Dr Naghma Siddiqi and

many others. Naghma played a very important role in spreading the message of Maulana. She would always carry a laptop with her. She started recording talks of Maulana. She sought permission from my father to spread these recorded talks. My father's reply was quite simple. He said that if she really thought it useful, then she should start doing it. Naghma was spell-bound. She had great passion to serve religion. She had earlier contacted many religious institutions and asked if she could be of any help there. She was not encouraged anywhere. This shows that there was no real scope for women in religious circles. This had a tremendous effect on Naghma. She collected and organized all available talks of Maulana. Together with my brother Dr Saniyasnain Khan, she built a recording studio. Mr Navdeep Kapur, a publisher joined CPS at the time and with the help of his office staff he made soft copies of all the English material available. Together the team developed www.cpsglobal.org. The reach of the mission spread far and wide.

Women members of CPS brought with them their friends and family and this continued. Ms Raazia Siddiqui, Ms Muslimah Siddiqui along with the three daughters of Dr Saniyasnain Khan: Ms Sadia Khan, Ms Maria Khan and Ms Sufia Khan started attending Maulana's Sunday classes regularly. Not only were these ladies able to obtain a better understanding of Islam, but they also found here a role to serve religion. Today all of them are playing a pivotal role in the CPS Mission.

Instead of finding denial and suppression, these women found that they were encouraged here. Through his writings and speeches, Maulana highlighted the revolutionary role that women could play in Islam. He supported his arguments through the examples of Prophet Abraham's wife Hagar, Prophet Muhammad's wife Aisha and Pharaoh's wife Asiya. These examples greatly inspired the women. They dedicated themselves to this mission.

The reason that women could do much more was that they are more passionate. Men are much busy with mundane affairs. They are unable to spare much time for these activities.

Thus, when women got the opportunity to work, they started working with full enthusiasm. They are working for this mission with the conviction that their endeavours would make them worthy and deserving of Paradise, which is a much greater impetus.

Aapa, CPS centres have been established throughout India and abroad. How did this materialize?

Following the model set by CPS International, New Delhi, readers of Al-Risala and Spirit of Islam established local chapters of CPS. This task was taken with great zeal and enthusiasm by Mr Khurram Qureshi who is a pilot in Air India. He manages domestic as well as international flights. He contacts the readers of Maulana's writings during his stays in various cities. He encourages the readers to organize their missionary activities. Through his efforts, CPS centres have been established all around the globe. His wife, Ms Ankhi Chattaraj is also a very important part of the mission. She is one of the main members of the editing team of CPS, New Delhi. Quran distributors and CPS volunteers are supported by CPS, New Delhi office which is meticulously managed by Mr Faraz Khan.

Ms Fahmida Khan and her daughter Ms. Tarab has been instrumental in galvanizing the female readers. Through the use of social media, especially WhatsApp, they have brought together female readers from all over the globe in contact with each other. Now, they share and discuss their intellectual development in social media groups.

What role does CPS Mission give to women?

Maulana has said that the role of a woman is similar to the role of a man. Men work according to their capabilities and the available opportunities. In the same way, women should also work according to their potential and available opportunities. If someone finds herself short of opportunities, then instead of complaining she should pray to God to open up opportunities for her. Women should train and nurture their families. Thus, a new generation will be trained. Women should prepare their families. If they are not getting a chance to go out, then they can get a chance at home. We were trained and nurtured by Maulana. One should have a discussion in their families in this regard. Discuss with them your intellectual discoveries. This makes the listeners passionate about religion. Human beings are curious by nature. You tell them one thing; they will try to find some more information about it.

Now, this is not an ordinary task. This is a work most pleasing to God. It is impossible that you are engaged sincerely in this mission without experiencing special help from God. You will most definitely receive God's blessings and you will most definitely play your role in this world. God-willing, you will get reward of your labours in the Hereafter.

What are your learnings from reading Maulana's books?

What I learned from reading Maulana's books is so great in magnitude and import that I cannot sum it up in words. My maternal grandfather was a *Sufi*. Due to his influence we would perform our prayers and recite the Quran regularly. We would fast in the appointed month. But it was mere formality. We never tried to understand the Quran. We never applied its teachings to our lives. We experienced no spiritual or intellectual development. Religion did not become a living force for us.

It was through Maulana's books that I understood the true nature of Islam. For the first time, it dawned upon me that Islam is a mission. It is a message that we have to understand and then apply to our lives, and then pass the message on to others. Realization of God, inculcating intense desire for Paradise and developing positive thinking are the goals that Islam sets for us. Then spreading this message to others is also of paramount importance.

The world never gives us what we want from it. This makes us negative. Thus, it becomes necessary to develop the art of positive thinking. We should learn to be thankful for what we have got. After we have performed our household chores, we should devote our time and energy in understanding the religion of God and in trying to make others understand it. Before reading Maulana's books, I did not know all this.

Through Maulana's books, I found my heart filled with such passion for this mission that I can't think of ever giving up this noble task. It has become an integral part of my life.

What is your message for Muslim women in general?

The message for Muslim women is to get good education first. They should equip themselves to play an integral role in their family and society. Then they should work on their personality development. They should spend quality time on their intellectual and spiritual development. The most important thing is to pray to God. They should pray to God that they get maximum opportunity to perform *dawah* work—conveying the message of Islam. *Dawah* work is of such a nature that one can perform it in any situation whatsoever. Every day, people visit other homes. One visits a doctor. The children go to school. So we can start doing *dawah* work in these spheres. Do as much as you have the opportunity to.

For example, my sister, Dr Muslimah Siddiqui did not have much opportunity to go anywhere. She started talking to her patients about

the creation plan of God. She also undertook the task of translating Maulana's literature into Hindi. One should not have a complaining attitude. One must make sure not to complain about the lack of opportunity, but use the opportunity that one has. You can carry Islamic literature with you when you go somewhere, and give that literature to people you meet.

What is your guidance for Muslim women for the CPS mission in particular?

Women already have certain responsibilities at home. They have to take care of their children. Any extra time that they get after household chores, they should spend it for the cause of the mission. They should read Maulana's books and understand them fully. They should read the Quran and apply it in life. They should share their discoveries and experiences with their family. We have many examples where one woman started working in this fashion in her family, and then her whole family supported her in this mission.

If you do not get a chance to go out, you can share these with the visitors such as friends and relatives. By the grace of God, this mission is now spreading all over the world. *Inshallah*, it will continue to spread in the same way and women will have a huge role in it. Women can play a revolutionary role in Islamic missionary tasks. *Inshallah* (God willing), they will be declared deserving for entering Paradise.

This is a mission by which we develop our personality. Many untoward incidents happen to us, we face big troubles in life. Problems arise but if we are intellectually developed human beings, then we can solve the problem ourselves. Otherwise, you will see many people commit suicide out of sheer frustration and depression. It has been said that people in CPS don't suffer from tension and frustration. This is an incorrect explanation. A person is born in this world with one's share of problems. But here, we know how to handle tension. We are able to immediately convert a negative experience into a positive lesson. We convert negativity into positivity. We have developed the ability to easily curb tension and transform it into positivity. And most importantly we have obtained a purpose of life, of presenting the message of Islam in the modern idiom to the world.

Thank you very much Aapa. You have patiently answered my questions. Your life is an inspiration for us. May Almighty God keep you in good health! May you continue to guide and inspire us! ❏

FROM THE SPIRITUAL TREE



There is a tree beside my house. I call it the 'Spiritual Tree'. I derive spiritual inspiration from it. A tree is an ever-growing being that was initially a seed possessing the potential of becoming a full-grown tree. A seed takes food from the universe around it and then grows into a tree. The same is true with spirituality, the desire for which is intrinsic to, and an integral part of, the very nature of every human being. To realize this spirituality, man must derive spiritual food from the universe around him. A tree converts carbon-dioxide into oxygen; a spiritual person is one who can take positive lessons from negative situations. From this perspective, a tree is an embodiment of a spiritual personality. ***—Maulana Wahiduddin Khan***

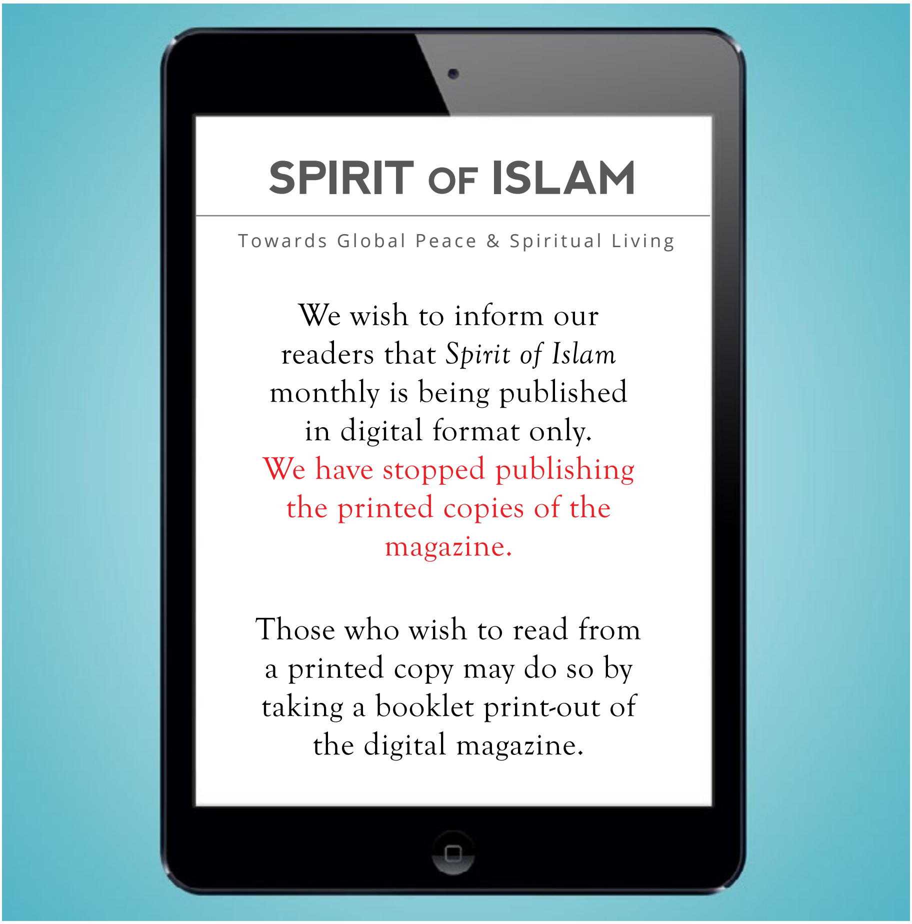
A FAULTLESS UNIVERSE

The words of the 2nd verse of the Quran: "Praise be to God, the Lord of the Universe" (1: 2) are a person's spontaneous utterance when he observes the universe. Telescopic observation tells us that the universe is, to an unimaginable extent, vast and majestic. Moreover, microscopic studies tell us that the unobservable universe is as majestic as the observable universe. In spite of all progress made by humanity, man has not yet succeeded in apprehending either the vastness or the grandeur of the universe. This vast and unfathomable universe is continuously in motion. At every moment, extremely meaningful events are taking place. Further study tells us that this vast universe is totally faultless. The universe can continually remain in a faultless state. Even the tiniest deviation in the universe can disturb its entire system.

The perfect harmony in the universe is a proof that it is functioning under an All-Powerful Creator. Had this not been so, the whole universe would be reduced to ultimate chaos.

Modern studies tell us that in spite of the universe being vast to an unimaginable extent; it is entirely harmonious in its functioning. That is because it is completely controlled by

a single force. All its parts are perfectly connected with one another. On seeing this universal harmoniousness, scientists find it astonishing. They do not know how to explain this extraordinary feature. This perfect harmony in the universe is a proof that it is functioning under an All-Powerful Creator. Had this not been so, the whole universe would be reduced to ultimate chaos. This perfect harmony prevailing in the universe is possible only because its Controller possesses the attribute of Omnipotence. ❏



THE ART OF THINKING

Importance of Right-thinking

AS human beings, we have the capacity to think, in the sense that we can, at a purely intellectual level, conceptualize and discriminate between right and wrong, good and bad. Animals, on the other hand, are governed by their instincts. The ability to think and plan a course of action is unique to human beings. Animals have no need to do this and are not liable to err, for their actions are governed by their natural instincts.

Since human beings are endowed with the ability to decide on a course of action (and cannot, in reality, do otherwise), it is necessary for everyone to fully awaken their senses and bend their mental faculties to the right way of thinking. Once we start thinking right, our actions will consequently be right. This article enumerates and explains some of the essentials of right-thinking.

THINK POSITIVE

Right-thinking is an art. Those who have learned the art can construct a successful life in this world. Those who are oblivious to it have nothing but failure in store for them.

All discoveries are made solely by thinking. They are not things that you stumble upon. Think, and you will discover the answers to everything.

To put it briefly, this art can be described as 'positive thinking'. That is, keeping an open mind, so that we can rise above the psychology of reaction or retaliation and plan objectively, after having arrived at rational conclusions. If positive thinking gives us the direction to use our intellectual capacity, negative thinking acts as a check upon the development of that intellectual capacity. Those who have a tendency towards negative thinking think and plan only under the influence of external situations, which may or may not be particularly good. Right-thinking leads us to progress and development. Wrong-thinking leads us in the opposite direction.

Humans are social beings. We cannot survive by ourselves. We need each other to sustain our needs. We are all, in one way or the other, indispensable to each other. In such a situation, reacting negatively is never beneficial. Success will come only to those who respond positively, even in negative situations.

DISCOVER BY THINKING

It is a fact that all of our activities are governed by our minds. We first think, then act. If we think right, our actions are right. If we do not think right, our actions will not be right. Right-thinking leads to making the right beginnings, and the right beginnings lead to the right results. When an apple falls from a tree, it always falls straight down. This has been so since the beginning of time. But people took this falling for granted. They probably felt that there was nothing to it to think about. What was happening was what should be happening. No one thought to question why.

Sir Isaac Newton, like the story goes, was probably the first person to think about this phenomenon. Why did the apple fall to the ground? Why did it fall? Why did not it go up? Unusual thoughts, but they helped Newton arrive at the conclusion that the earth exerted a force on the apple. He proceeded to discover the laws of gravity.

In a similar way, for millennia, people believed that the earth was flat. This theory appeared to be true as far as anyone could see. Therefore, it was held to be an established fact. Standing on the coast, if you watch the horizon for ships, you will first see the masts of any ship. As the ship comes closer, the mast rises up until the entire ship is visible. The ship seems to have risen from below the horizon. Think about this phenomenon.

If the earth was flat, the entire ship would have appeared in the distance. The entire ship would have been visible as a speck on the horizon that became clearer as the ship came closer. But only the masts of the ships were visible at first. The earth is obviously not flat, as we can see for ourselves. This is how the ancient Greeks learnt that the earth is not flat.

Right-thinking leads us to progress and development. Wrong thinking leads us in the opposite direction.

The truth is that all discoveries are made solely by thinking. They are not things that you stumble upon. Think, and you will discover the answers to everything.

LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE

Another important principle of right-thinking concerns our ability to control our minds. This enables us to derive lessons from the various incidents we experience. The readiness to learn lessons from our

experiences, and those of others, helps us in intellectual development and saves us from unnecessary loss.

Life is a series of experiences. If our eyes and ears are open and receptive, we can always derive useful lessons from them. These lessons enable us to construct our lives better. Acquire a receptive and open mind, and develop the ability to learn from experience, both your own, and that of others.

It is our level of thinking which determines success or failure. Success is the result of right-thinking. Think right, do right, and succeed.

DISTINGUISH

An important aspect of the art of thinking is to be able to distinguish between things which, on the surface, appear to be similar, but on a deeper level, are radically different. There are a number of things in this world which fall into this category, and our failure to understand the difference often results in great loss.

At every point in our lives, we are faced with a choice—between courses of action; between opinions; between ideas. This can be related to all matters in our daily life. We must refrain from forming opinions due to apparent or partial similarities. We must clearly analyze the difference between things and then form our opinions. Anyone who fails to comprehend this wisdom is like a driver who fails to differentiate between an empty street and a street full of traffic.

ADJUST

We are all born idealists. We constantly seek higher ideals, the highest and best in all spheres. This idealistic approach sounds good in theory, but is destructive in the long run. The reason is that we do not live our lives alone. Everyone's interests, considerations and choices vary. Everyone has a personal, unique view of what is good, bad, and ideal. Owing to this state of affairs, the achievement of the personal ideal is impossible. The only practical solution is to adopt the policy of adjustment with others. We must avoid all friction by ignoring obvious provocation, for trouble avoided is trouble averted.

IGNORE PROVOCATION

Conflicts and quarrels have always been a feature of human society. That is not to say that there is no escape from this deplorable situation. It depends solely upon the concerned individuals whether they entangle

themselves in such conflicts or manage to keep themselves away. This holds true for individuals as well as for nations.

Most quarrels start with verbal exchanges that grow heated. People overreact and become hostile to each other. Their retaliatory thinking often results in full-fledged enmity. Negative action is the result of negative thinking.

Negative activities should be countered in a positive manner. The best principle to follow is that whenever you encounter an unpleasant situation; think carefully before speaking or acting. Verbal exchanges can snowball into more serious conflicts. If something poses a real threat, it must be taken seriously. You should make every effort to solve the problem at hand, but confine yourself to resolving it by discussing it. Even if your feelings are hurt, there is no real harm, only imaginary harm. And reacting on imaginary grounds would not be wise. Learn to exercise restraint and ignore provocation.

Instead of wasting your time being provoked into fighting, you should stick to the path of positive action and avoid negative action.

THINK OUT OF THE BOX

To think out of the box is to think differently, unconventionally, and from new perspectives. You are not limited to thinking in terms of black and white. There are grey areas in between. Better options exist. And thinking out of the box will lead you to these better options. For instance, if someone says something hurtful to us, we tend to become angry and quarrel with the person responsible. We sometimes feel that if we do not react to the insult, it shows cowardice, while fighting back would be considered brave.

But this is the result of wrong-thinking. The truth is that in this situation, there is a better option—the way of avoidance. Instead of wasting your time being provoked into fighting, you should stick to the path of positive action and avoid negative action. There is a saying that illustrates this better option—“Dogs may bark, but the elephant goes on”.

This is not just a matter of morality. It is in fact an important part of life’s reality. There are different types of people in this world. That is why we are confronted with unpleasant experiences. If we are provoked by every unpleasant experience, we will fail to devote ourselves to any worthwhile goal. Time and resources in this world are limited. We

cannot afford to spend these precious things on 'teaching someone a lesson', or on retaliation, or other such negative actions. The price we pay for these futile engagements is our own progress and development.

HOLD YOURSELF ACCOUNTABLE

We are not machines controlled by some sort of system, nor are we animals, governed only by instincts. We enjoy freedom. We make decisions and take action of our own free will. The question is how to make sure we make the right decisions and take the right action.

History shows the ineffectiveness of all worldly measures in this connection—whether social pressure, law enforcement or reformation. It is not possible for people on their own to bind themselves to moral values or to adhere to justice. This is possible only when they are convinced that they are under a watchful gaze of a superpower—a living and powerful God who is perfect and just.

The concept of a living and powerful God is necessarily accompanied by the concept of accountability. God is just, and each one of us is answerable to Him for our actions. This guarantees that we think right, and do right. This, in turn, gives us the conviction that we will receive God's eternal reward if we always think right, and do right.

The truth of the matter is that it is our level of thinking which determines success or failure. Success is the result of right-thinking. Think right, do right, and succeed. ❏

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A LIFE DEDICATED TO PEACE & SPIRITUALITY

In the way of God for humanity

THE editor-in-chief of *Spirit of Islam*, the famous Islamic scholar and tireless pacifist Maulana Wahiduddin Khan has recently been awarded India's second-highest civilian honour, the Padma Vibhushan. Padma Vibhushan is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service. The awards were announced on the occasion of Republic Day this year. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, in addition to having expertise in traditional Islamic theology, has an exceptionally good knowledge of science, history and social science. He is well-known for examining the Islamic principles in light of these modern subjects and presenting its interpretation in the contemporary perspective.

"India's template for a good Muslim is the same as its template for a good Hindu, Sikh or Christian, etc. Neither is it any different from the Islamic or the universal model of a good person—that he should be a good citizen who enriches society by service, charity, peace and amity. It is from this vantage that Wahiduddin Khan dives into the vast resources of Islamic traditions to bring to the surface its universal human values."

So writes Mr Najmul Hoda, an IPS officer, in his column for *New Age Islam* (Feb. 11, 2021).

Born in 1925, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan has been actively presenting the ideology of peace and spirituality since the early 1950s. Presenting Islam in contemporary idiom is his mission statement. To this end, he established *Centre for Peace and Spirituality (CPS)* in 2001. Before that, he also established the *Islamic Centre* and *Goodword Books*. The purpose of all these establishments was the same: to present the true face of religion through Islamic literature and present a counter-narrative in light of Quran and *Hadith* to those who are damaging the image of Islam in the name of *Jihad* and resorting to terrorism. Also, to remove misconceptions about Islam, he has written more than 200 books. He has also produced an easy-to-understand translation of the Quran in contemporary English. This is being further translated into many national and international languages. These Quran translations are being distributed all around the world. CPS has also been connected to the latest technology. The websites www.cpsglobal.org and www.cpsquran.com have been developed, and books are being digitized, video-recording of the lecture sessions is being done in recording

studios along with the live streaming of such sessions. In particular, the sessions on the Quran are a big hit. Now CPS has become a globally recognized organization.

In 2002, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan was awarded the Demiurgus Peace International Award by the Nuclear Disarmament Forum AG. The award, under the patronage of the former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, was given to acknowledge his outstanding achievements in strengthening peace among nations and for his efforts to develop a complete ideology of peace and present Islamic teachings in the style and language of the present day. The award was presented at a ceremony by Dr Alexander Bessmertnykh, chairman of the World Council of Former Foreign Ministers (WCFFM).

He has also been awarded the title of Ambassador of Peace by the International Federation for World Peace, Korea. Some of the other awards presented to him are the Padma Bhushan (2000), the Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavna Award (2009), the National Integration Award, the Communal Harmony Award, the Diwaliben Mohan Lal Mehta Award, the National Amity Award, the Dilli Gaurav Award, the FIE Foundation Award, the Urdu Academy Award, the Aruna Asaf Ali Sadbhavna Award and the National Citizen’s Award, presented by Mother Teresa. He was conferred with the Sayyidina Imam Al Hassan Ibn Ali Peace Award (2015) in Abu Dhabi and Lifetime Achievement Award by the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) at Chicago in 2015.

Acknowledging his contribution for a peaceful India, spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar commented:

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is a very renowned spiritual leader of our country. I call him our Bhishma Pitamaha, the eldest of our spiritual wealth of this country. His way of peace gives a new understanding about Islam and what Islam says. (...) tenets of peace, I think that is most needed today where there (are) so much fractions, fanaticism and small mindedness. Wahiduddin Khan’s philosophy and his interpretation are most valuable. Harmony and diversity are his main sutras. I think it is a very valuable mission that he is on in bringing peace to people.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan envisions India as the *Spiritual Superpower* of the world. Former President of India Dr A P J Abdul Kalam paid tribute to his efforts towards this end. He said:

> I have read many of his books. I see him as an embodiment of real spiritual engagement. I have got great respect for him. ❑

THE STORY OF KHADIJA



***Dr. Saniyasnain Khan** is a prolific writer of children's books with more than 100 titles to his name. His books focus on Islamic themes and have been translated into many languages. He was awarded Sharjah Children's Book Award in 2013 for his book The Story of Khadija. Khadija was the first Muslim and the wife of the Prophet Muhammad. Khadija's life is a source of great inspiration to believers, especially women. She is an excellent example of how one can give to the cause of Islam one's time, energy, wealth and life. The following is a selection from this award-winning book.*

KHADIJA (555-619) was a noble lady of Makkah. She was well known all around for her good nature and wealth. Like the Prophet Muhammad, she belonged to the tribe of the Quraysh. They had a common great-grandfather who was called Qusayy ibn Kilab. This is how they both were a part of the same big family. Khadija was a 40-years-old rich widow when she married Prophet Muhammad.

The Prophet and Khadija had six children, two boys and four girls. Both the boys, Qasim and Abdullah, died when they were still babies. The four daughters, Zaynab, Ruqayya, Umm Kulthum and Fatima, grew up into beautiful young girls and were married when the time came. After his marriage to Khadija, the Prophet started to spend more and more time thinking. There were many questions to which he tried to find an answer:

"Who is the being that has made the earth and the heavens and everything that is between them? How did man come into being? Why was he placed on earth? How should he live on earth? What is life? What is death? And what will happen to man after he dies?"

After years of seeking the truth, God showered His mercy on him and quenched his thirst for truth. He was visited by an angel in a cave called Hira. Here, he was blessed with prophethood. However, this experience in the Cave of Hira shook the Prophet to his core. He did not know what to make of it. Disturbed and frightened, he went straight home and told Khadija about the incident and said:

"Khadija, I do not understand what has happened to me. I am worried about my life." Seeing him trembling in shock and distress, Khadija put a blanket over him and comforted him saying:

"God will never let you down. You are kind to your family. You are truthful. You help the needy and the poor. You gladly welcome anybody who comes as a guest to your house. You follow the way of truth and justice."

Some time passed in this way. And then, one day, the angel Gabriel told the Prophet: "Now the time has come to call people to Islam and preach the message openly."

> ***Khadija not only gave her wealth in the cause of Islam but also became personally involved in dawah work. She organized meals for the people of Makkah. This gave her a chance to meet them in groups, to talk to them and tell them about Islam.***

The Prophet realized that this was the beginning of a new era and that now much was going to be expected of him. He started to preach Islam full time. He gave up his business activities and Khadija placed her whole wealth at his disposal. Her entire fortune was used up in the cause of Islam.

Khadija not only gave her wealth in the cause of Islam but also became personally involved in *dawah* work. She organized meals for the people of Makkah. This gave her a chance to meet them in groups, to talk to them and tell them about Islam. Some of them liked what they heard and joined the small group of believers.

But not everybody liked the Prophet's message and many people in Makkah opposed Islam. This was especially true of the Quraysh tribe, who were the leaders of Makkah. They were scared that people would turn away from tribal traditions and would no longer listen to them.

They began to be cruel to the Prophet and those who accepted Islam. They spoke rudely to them, threw dust and garbage on them when they passed their houses, and would not let them buy goods in their shops or do business with them. They would not allow them to take part in their gatherings. They spread all sorts of lies about them.

One day the Prophet was sitting in the cave of Hira and did not return home at his usual time. Khadija became worried. She thought the Quraysh might harm him so she sent a man to look for him. She wondered: "What could have happened to him? Why is he late?"

The man she sent returned empty-handed and told her that he could not find the Prophet anywhere in town. Khadija decided to go and look for him herself. At that time the Prophet was in the cave with the angel

Gabriel. Gabriel said to the Prophet:

“Khadija is coming here. She has got some food and water for you.” And then he added:

“When she comes in, give her the greetings from her Lord and tell her that there will be a house made of pearls for her in Paradise.”

When Khadija arrived, the Prophet told her: “Here is Gabriel. He is giving greetings to you from your Lord and he is greeting you.”

Khadija replied: “God is peace and He is the source of all peace! May God’s peace and blessings be upon you, Messenger of God. And my greetings to Gabriel”.

The hatred of the Quraysh was so strong, that soon the Prophet, his wife Khadija, their children, his uncle Abu Talib and his family, and all those who accepted Islam were forced to leave their homes in Makkah. They took refuge in an open plot of land called Shi’b Abi Talib, just outside the town. There were no proper houses there and they had to live in tents. It was like a refugee camp and the family of the Prophet had to stay there for almost three years. They faced hunger, disease and poverty. Sometimes they had to eat the leaves from a tree to satisfy their hunger, for there was hardly anything else to eat.

Khadija could have stayed on in Makkah. But she chose to stay with the Prophet in these times of trial and difficulty. Once the richest lady of Makkah, Khadija now lived in a makeshift tent under the open sky, without enough food and water. But she did not complain. She bore the difficulties with great patience and endurance. Her presence was a support to the Prophet.

All the people in the makeshift camp lived in great poverty. They wore old clothes and slept on old blankets. They had hardly any personal belongings. Khadija had just one wooden bucket and a mug. One day even the mug broke. She had not enough money to buy a new mug for herself. So she remained patient about it. Luckily, a carpenter was passing her tent and agreed to repair it for her.

When the ban was finally lifted, the harsh treatment the believers had had to endure during the years of the ban had left them broken in mind and spirit. Their health suffered due to long starvation and many of them were sick. Khadija’s health was not good either. She had suffered great hardship and instead of eating herself, used to give all the food to her children and husband. She passed away in the month of Ramadan in AD 619. ❏

MOTHERS OF THE BELIEVERS

The Extraordinary Role of Muslim Women

IT is stated in the Quran that the wives of the Prophet are the mothers of the believers (33: 6). This title of the Prophet's spouses shows how much they are to be respected and honoured by the Muslims.

The words that appear in the Quran about the wives of the Prophet, on the one hand, describe the status of the spouses themselves, and on the other hand, through these words, it is made manifest what place they should have among the Muslims.

When the Prophet migrated from Makkah to Madinah, it was no ordinary journey. It destroyed his as well as his Companions' economy. In these dire circumstances, it became very difficult to provide the necessary financial means for his family. This was the time when Prophet's spouses asked for financial support to care for their essential expenses.

Under normal circumstances, it is not objectionable for women to seek and demand material help. But this demand was inappropriate to the historic role that the wives of the Prophet had to play in his mission. Therefore, the Quran addressed them in these reprimanding words:

O Prophet, say to your wives, 'If you seek the life of this world and all its finery then come, I will make provision for you, and release you honourably. But if you seek God and His Messenger and the abode of the Hereafter, then know that God has prepared a great reward for those of you who do good deeds.' Wives of the Prophet! Any one of you who commits a flagrant act of misconduct shall be doubly punished. That is easy enough for God.

But those of you who obey God and His Messenger and do good deeds shall be doubly rewarded. For them, We have made an excellent provision. Wives of the Prophet, you are not like any other women. If you fear God, do not be too soft-spoken in case the ill-intentioned should feel tempted. Speak in an appropriate manner.

Stay in your homes and do not flaunt your charms as in the former times of ignorance. Attend to your prayers, pay the zakat and obey God and His Messenger. Women of the [Prophet's] Household, God seeks only to remove all impurity from you, and to make you completely pure. Bear in mind all that is recited in your homes of the revelations of God and of wisdom. God is all-pervading and all-aware. (33: 28-34)

In these verses of the Quran, all necessary directives about the Prophet's wives are very clearly stated. These verses enumerate their responsibilities and the duties of the believers towards them.

It is clear from these verses that the Prophet's wives did not get the status of *Umm-ul-Mumineen,* i.e. Mothers of the believers only as a title. This title was granted to them for their pious deeds and exemplary sacrifices. The fact is that they fully deserve to be given the status of Mother of the Believers till the Day of Resurrection.

According to some *Hadith* reports, when the above-mentioned verses were revealed in which the wives of the Prophet were given the option to stay with the Prophet if they wished and to separate if they wished. Then the Prophet entered the house and said to his wife Aisha: "O Aisha, I would like to talk to you about one matter. Regarding this option, you should not be in a hurry to decide unless you consult your parents on this matter. Aisha replied: "O Prophet of God, I will not consult my parents in this matter. Rather, I prefer God and His Messenger and his house."

Similar was the response of all of his wives. None of them decided to separate from the Prophet based on the option provided by the Quran. Under the circumstances, the decision of the spouses to stay with the Prophet was an extraordinary sacrifice. Because at that time the situation was that apart from other facilities of life, even simple food was not available for two meals a day.

The condition of the Prophet's wives at that time can be gauged from an incident. Aisha narrates that once an *Ansari* (a Muslim of Madinah) sent a goat to her house. They struggled to make proper pieces of the meat at night. Someone said, "Why didn't you light a lamp so that you could chop the meat in the light of the lamp?" Aisha replied that if we had oil to light a lamp, we would drink this oil owing to the intensity of hunger.

The fact is that the difficult situation in which the Prophet's wives decided to stay with him is a unique example and only one of its kind in history. This was great planning of God Almighty. Due to this, the uncommon and extraordinary greatness of the spouses was established so that people would consider them as role models for themselves.

It is mentioned in the above verses that if the Prophet's wives do good deeds and adopt the method of obedience, they will be rewarded twice as much as others.

This double reward was exactly in accordance with their privilege. One reward was for their good deeds. The second reward was because they performed good and pious deeds at the level of sacrifice. The Prophet's wives were destined to play the role of guides for society. It would not have been possible for the wives of the Prophet to play a leading role in society unless people considered them superior in morals and character. The Prophet's wives paid this price through extraordinary sacrifices. Therefore, they deserved a double reward.

The Prophet's youngest wife Aisha's role in this regard is very special. All the biographers of the Prophet are in unison that the benefits bestowed on the ummah by Aisha in teaching, training, and propagation of Islam were more than most of the male Companions of the Prophet.

In the above-mentioned verse of the Quran, while addressing the wives of the Prophet, they are commanded that they should not adopt a soft tone while talking to the people. (33: 32)

This directive indicates that there was a special plan in giving the status of Mothers of the Believers to the wives of the Prophet. They were expected to work and guide the believers in *dawah* (missionary) activity and training them. According to God's plan, believers were to come to the wives of the Prophet to discover the teachings of Islam and find solutions to their religious questions. Among those who would come would not only be women but also men. Therefore, the said order was given so that there would be no possibility of any psychological complication while talking to the men. Thus, history has shown that it was in the time of the Prophet, and even after his death, many men and women kept coming to his wives to enquire about Islamic injunctions about various matters.

This shows that it was of special interest that the Prophet was allowed to keep more than four wives. This arrangement was essential to expedite the purpose of the training. It is clear that one woman alone could not be enough to serve the needs of training and education of a society. This required a number of women to whom people could turn and then discover Islamic injunctions. The wives of the Prophet belonged to different tribes and different families. In this way, they became a source of reference for the tribe and family. Thus, history shows that men and women of every tribe and every family used to come to the houses of the Prophet's wives and ask them for rules and issues according to their needs.

In the above verses, the wives of the Prophet are commanded to stay in their homes and bear in mind all that is recited in their homes of the revelations of God and of wisdom. (33: 32-33)

This verse shows that the Mothers of the believers were specially trained for the task of reforming the Muslim community, i.e. *ummah*. They were instructed to put an end to all irrelevant interests and activities and focus all their attention to gain learning and wisdom from the Prophet. This arrangement was put in place because the teachings of the Prophet had to be preserved so that during and after the life of the Prophet they could convey these teachings to the *ummah*.

The Prophet's youngest wife Aisha's role in this regard is very special. All the biographers of the Prophet are in unison that the benefits bestowed on the *ummah* by Aisha in teaching, training, and propagation of Islam were more than most of the male Companions of the Prophet.

The simple reason was that Aisha was the youngest of all the wives. Coupled with it, she was very intelligent and had an extraordinary memory. Because of her great mental abilities, she memorized everything she heard from the Prophet in its most correct and perfect form. She fully understood and kept in mind every deed of the Prophet.

Aisha lived for about fifty years after the death of the Prophet. She became a means of conveying the teachings of the Prophet to the next two Muslim generations. It would be correct to say that Aisha was a great mercy for the Muslim *ummah* due to her special attributes. She became a kind of living tape record and a source of blessings for the Muslim community for almost half a century. ❑

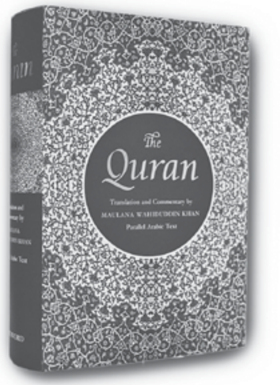


The best of you is one who is best for his family, and I am best of all of you for my family.

—Prophet Muhammad

THE WORD OF GOD

From The Scriptures



The Quran is the book of God. It has been preserved in its entirety since its revelation to the Prophet of Islam between CE 610 and 632. It is a book that brings glad tidings to humankind, along with divine admonition, and stresses the importance of man's discovery of the Truth on a spiritual and intellectual level.

Translated from Arabic and commentary by
Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

When He shall gather you all for the Day of Gathering, that will be the Day of loss and gain; and whoever believes in God and does good deeds shall be forgiven their sins and admitted to Gardens through which rivers flow, where they shall dwell forever. That is the supreme triumph. But those who denied the truth and rejected Our signs shall be the inmates of the Fire, there to remain—what an evil destination! No affliction can befall man but by God's permission—He guides the hearts of those who believe in Him: God has knowledge of all things—obey God and obey the Messenger; but if you turn away, remember that Our Messenger is only responsible for clearly conveying the message. God! There is no god but He, so let the faithful put their trust in Him. (64:9-13)

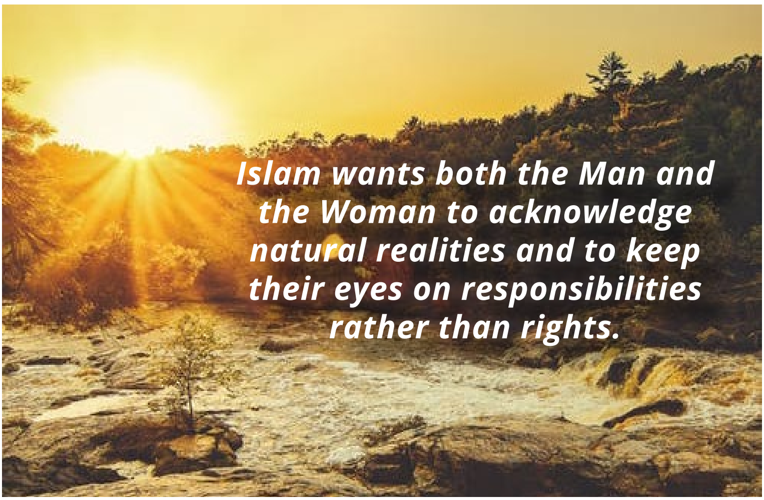
People take the world to be a place of winning or losing. One who is successful here becomes very happy, but one who meets with failure is looked upon with contempt. In this world, however, success is as valueless as failure is. The place of true success or failure is the Hereafter. One is a failure if he fails in the Hereafter and successful if he is successful in the Hereafter, and the criterion of success or failure there is entirely different from that of this world, where it is based on outward materialism: success or failure in the Hereafter will be on the basis of Divine moral values. At that time, people will be surprised to see that the whole complexion of things has completely changed. Gaining, which was considered as such will actually turn out to be losing, while what was considered as losing will turn out to be gaining in the real sense. Failure on that Day is real failure and success on that Day will be real success.

No trouble arrives of its own accord. Every tribulation comes from God, and it afflicts man so that, through it, he should receive guidance. Trouble softens a man's heart and jolts him out of his moral slumber. Trouble prods and sharpens a man's mind. If he refrains from negative reaction, then trouble will become the best divine instruction for him.

Believers! [Even] among your spouses and your children you have enemies: so beware of them. But if you overlook their offences and forgive and pardon them, then surely, God is most forgiving and merciful. Your wealth and your children are only a trial; God's reward is great: so be mindful of God as best as you can; and listen, and obey; and spend in charity: it is for your own good. Those who guard themselves against their own greed will surely prosper: if you give a good loan to God, He will multiply it for you and forgive you, for God is appreciative and forbearing; God is the Knower of the unseen and the seen: He is the Almighty, the Wise One. (64:14-18)

Man has the utmost attachment for his children. He may talk of principles on every other subject, but where his children are concerned, he becomes unprincipled. That is why it is mentioned in a teaching of the Prophet Muhammad that children cause their parents to be timid and miserly. In another teaching it is mentioned that on the Day of Judgement a man will be brought before God, and it will be said of him that his wife and children ate away all his virtues.

Man, for the sake of his children, does not spend for the divine cause, though the truth is that if he spends for the sake of God, he will be recompensed by Him many times over. ❑



ASK MAULANA

Your Questions Answered

The remedy for ignorance is asking questions. (Prophet Muhammad)

The spirit of enquiry is the hallmark of an open society and the above saying of the Prophet aptly illustrates this principle. A culture of curiosity and open-mindedness will foster development in any society by motivating its members to learn enthusiastically and enrich their knowledge. This is because awareness of one's ignorance is half of knowledge, as it becomes a stepping-stone to seeking and finding answers. A questioning mind is like a flowing river that is replenished with fresh thoughts and ideas and continues on its journey.

How do I build patience?

If you become a realist, patience will follow. We must learn that things are never going to be according to our desire; they would be according to the laws of nature. I have always been very fond of trees and in my youth I once wanted to see a green tree in the courtyard of my home. I thought that if I planted a sapling, it would take a long time to grow into a tree. So, I went to my garden and selected a fully-grown tree. I then employed several labourers to dig it up and then transport it to my courtyard where I had it planted. But the next morning when I looked at the tree, I found that its leaves had begun to wither, and after a few days the whole tree dried up.

A similar story had featured in the *Reader's Digest* where a reverend Father had attempted a similar planting exercise. He was very happy and was thinking to himself; I have travelled a long journey in a single day. Planting a sapling or a seed would have been a lengthy business and now I have found a quick way of having a lush green tree. Naturally, he was disappointed. One of his friends visited him and found him in a very sad mood. On being asked the reason, he said; 'I am in a hurry, but God isn't.'

This story informs us about the law of nature, which is based on gradual development and not on sudden leaps. One who follows this law of nature will be successful, while the one who fails to follow it, will never succeed. If we analyze what happened, we would realize that whatever happened was what was going to happen, there was nothing else that could have happened.

This law of nature does not exclusively apply to trees; it is a universal law. In every field, we need to realize that nature shall follow its own course and consequently it would take its own time to get the desired result. Only then can we observe patience and calm; otherwise one cannot attain any worthwhile goal by deviating from laws of nature and realistic thinking.

How do I control my anger?

I have spent significant time on this topic and my conclusion is that nature has instilled a special mechanism in a person by which he can control his anger. When angry, all one has to do is observe silence. Anger incites a psychological fire within a person and in the resulting rage, he is not able to control himself. But when one becomes silent in moments of anger, the rage instantly begins to take a downward trend. So, when someone provokes us, we must simply become quiet.

At all such times, I myself do not react and I have experienced that anger takes no time in subsiding. Reaction leads to chain reactions and not reacting stops the chain reaction, but in order to stop the chain reaction, one needs the power of self-control. Only the spiritually strong can break the chain reaction in a situation involving provocation and rage. It is a sign of great strength. As per a *Hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad: The strong man is not one who is good at wrestling, but the strong man is one who controls himself in a fit of rage. (*Sahih al Bukhari*)

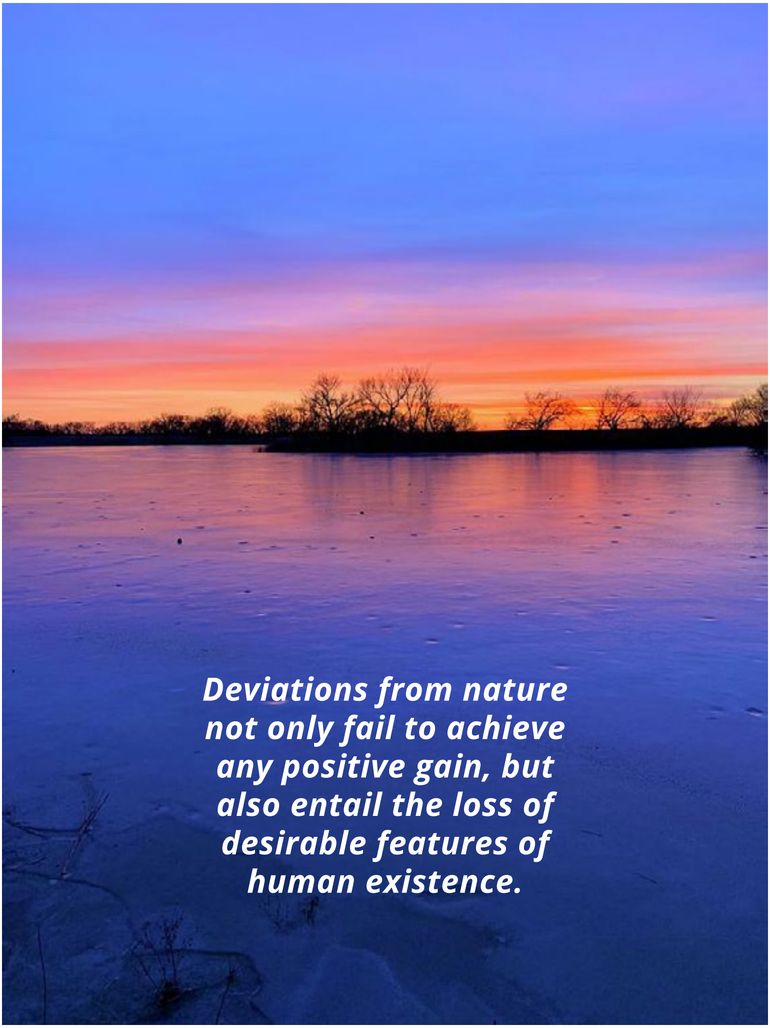
It has been alluded to in the Quran that one may earn a position in Paradise by being forgiving at times of anger: for those who spend, both in prosperity and adversity who restrain their anger and are forgiving towards their fellow men—God loves those who do good works. (3: 135)

Even I used to get angry in my early days. A closer scrutiny made me realize that anger yields no result. I then concluded that it was futile to waste energy on anger.

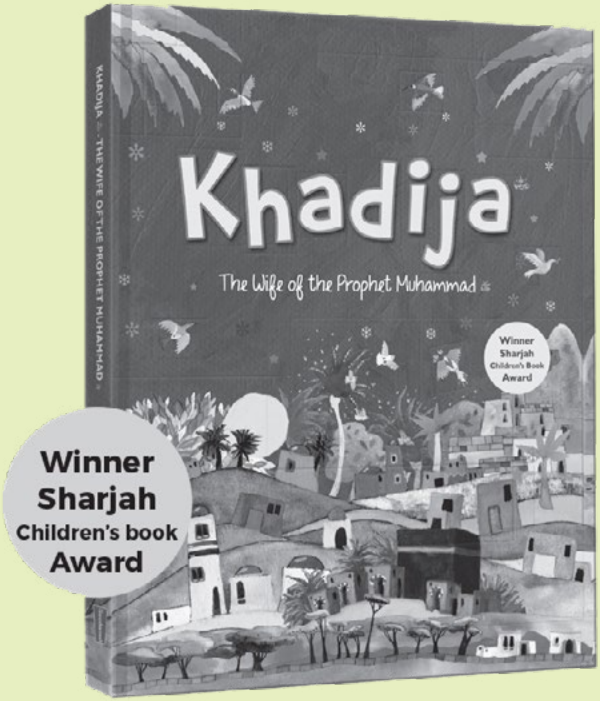
In the year 1975 I was invited to Ahmedabad by a young engineer who had set up a factory there. He was a very competent person. As he was showing me his factory we came across a new kind of machinery which was produced in those days only for export purpose. While demonstrating the prowess of the machine, he first pushed on a button and its flywheel started rotating at top speed. He then pushed another button and the flywheel immediately changed its direction and started rotating opposite to the previous position. As I saw this, it struck me that when matter (or machine) has the quality to change its direction

within seconds, then a human being should have this ability manifold. After this incident, I started training my mind to change my emotion within seconds, whenever a situation requiring so arises.

Hence, in moments of rage when our natural tendency is to speak or react aggressively, we need to instantaneously change the direction of our flywheel and remain silent. Without doubt, anger shall dissipate and we shall be in a position to prudently handle the situation. ❑



The Story of Khadija



Khadija's life is a source of great inspiration to believers, especially women. She is an excellent example of how one can give to the cause of Islam one's time, energy, wealth and life.

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